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HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Established by

STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

by

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HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS  
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If yours is that hypothetical "typical" State, it will require that all boys and girls graduating from high school shall complete, in their last four years, 3 or 4 units of English and 1, 2, or 3 units of social studies. The chances are equally good that your State will require a year of science and a year of mathematics or that it will require no science or mathematics. Almost invariably, if it does not require one of these two subjects, it will not require the other.

Your State, if it is typical, will require all pupils to receive one to four years of instruction in health and physical education, for which it may or may not give a unit of credit. As to electives, your State is most likely to allow 8 or more elective subjects within the total 16 units required for graduation.

Obviously, there really are no typical States. In general, the most impressive characteristic of State requirements is their apparent dissimilarity. Here are a few notable differences. Six States have extended their total unit requirements above the usual 16, to 17, 19, and 20. Three States permit a lesser number--15 or  $15\frac{1}{5}$ . In two States, units earned in grade 9 are not counted for graduation; these States, therefore, specify totals of 12 and 13 units. Another three State departments of education either have not established a total number of units or have eliminated the specification.

Even more divergent are the total unit requirements in subject areas:

- 5 States specify no required subject units
- 5 other States specify only  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  subject units

Thus 10 States allow almost a full slate of electives, at the discretion of the local systems. At the other extreme:

- 1 State specifies 12 subject units (4 of them in health and physical education)
- 2 States specify 11 units
- 4 States specify 10 units

Thus these 7 States allow opportunity for only a few electives.

In general, State departments of education do not crowd the pupil's program with specific subject requirements to the extent that he is unable to elect the subjects he wishes without increasing his total units beyond 16 (or whatever minimum the State requires for graduation). For example, in 27 States a pupil may elect 9 or more units of the required total; in 9 other States he may elect 8 of the total required units, unless modifications are made at the local level. In one-fourth of the States, however, he has a choice of subjects covering 7 or fewer units.

Subject areas of concern to State departments of education.

The following summary table shows the number of States requiring instruction in basic subject areas:

Subject requirements of State departments of education--high school grades 9-12. <sup>1/</sup>								
Subject	Number of States							No requirement
	4	3	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	2	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	Other <sup>2/</sup>	
English	15	22						11
Social studies		11	1	16	4	10	1	3
Mathematics				1	1	24		22
Science				4		23		$\frac{3}{21}$
Health and	2			1		16	1	$\frac{4}{16}$
physical ed.							12	
Fine or practical				1		3		44
arts								

<sup>1/</sup>Includes 9th grade requirements for Minnesota and Pennsylvania, although these States count only units earned in grades 10-12 to compute graduation requirements.

<sup>2/</sup>Instruction is required but units of credit are not specified.

<sup>3/</sup>One State Board strongly recommends that a unit of science be required.

<sup>4/</sup>Three States strongly recommend that the school require 1-4 years of health and physical education.

Some States itemize one or more social studies courses as obligatory for all pupils and a few States do the same for the science course or courses. The most common course specifications are American history and government:

41 States require American history.

27 States specify American government, civics, citizenship, or the Constitution. Most of the 10 States mentioning instruction in the Constitution report it as a legal requirement.

Besides the units of instruction in basic subjects, several States have other prerequisites to high school graduation:

3 States--Arkansas, Florida, and Wisconsin--require the teaching of conservation of natural resources.

7 States report that teaching the effects of alcoholic drinks and narcotics is a statutory requirement.

2 States--California and North Dakota--require driver education.

8 States require that the pupil follow a program which will assure him 2 or 3 years' work in two or more

fields. A requirement of 2 majors of 3 units each and 2 minors of 2 units each is typical.

Instruction in each of the following is mentioned by one or two States: fire prevention, first aid and safety, flag education, manners and morals, principles of agriculture.

The following State-by-State listing was compiled from manuals, handbooks, and other materials supplied by State departments of education. A preliminary draft was sent to each of the State departments with the request that they advise us of any inaccuracies. A few States requested changes and these were incorporated.

# STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
ALABAMA	English	4
16	Social studies: Citizenship and Alabama history 1; American history 1; Economics $\frac{1}{2}$ ; Democracy $\frac{1}{2}$	3
	Mathematics	1
	General science (9th grade)	1
	Physical education, 4 years	1-2
	Electives	<u>5 or 6</u>
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ARIZONA	English	3
15	Social studies: American history 1; Civics $\frac{1}{2}$ (which must include both the U.S. and Arizona constitutions); elective $\frac{1}{2}$	2
	Mathematics	1
	Science	1
	Electives	<u>8</u>
	A year of health and physical education for each pupil is recommended, but not required.	
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ARKANSAS	English (Speech and Journalism may be substituted for 12th grade English)	4
16	American history (required by law)	1
	Electives	<u>11</u>
	All high schools are required by law to teach conservation of natural resources, but not as	

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
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a separate subject. Physical education is also required by law of all students.

One major of 3 units and 3 minors of 2 units each are required.

# CALIFORNIA

\*19

By legislative enactments (which do not specify the number of units, however), all pupils must receive instruction in the following:

Constitution of the U.S., American history, including American institutions and ideals, and the principles of State (California) and local government

1½

Manners and morals; alcohol and narcotics; fire prevention; principles and practice of first aid

Physical education (a full instructional period each day)

4

Driver education (30 class hours set by legislature)

Electives

13½

One high school in every district is required to provide a course of study in line with the University of California's entrance requirements. The following program is required of all college-preparatory pupils: 3 units of English; 1½ units of U.S. history; 2 of mathematics; 2 of foreign language; 1 of laboratory science; 1 additional unit in either mathematics, science or foreign language; and 4 units of physical education.

\*"Total subject requirements are '190 to 240' semester periods. (Semester period is defined as one period of 40-60 minutes per week throughout one semester of not less than 17 weeks)."

# COLORADO

16

No units specified. By statute, all public high school graduates must have received instruction in the Federal Constitution. This is the only requirement.

Electives

16

# CONNECTICUT

American history

1

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
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DELAWARE

16

English  
Social studies  
Electives

4  
2  
10

Instruction in the Constitution of the U.S. and of Delaware is a legal requirement.

Teaching the effect of alcoholic drinks and narcotics is also a legal requirement.

Health and physical education is required of all pupils insofar as the teaching force is adequate.

Delaware issues 5 diplomas: Academic, Scientific, Commercial, Vocational, and General. For each of these, except the General, the State Department of Public Instruction requires pupils to complete additional required courses. The Academic Diploma, for example, calls for 2 units of Latin, 2 units of a second foreign language, 3 of mathematics, and 1 of science. The Scientific Diploma requires 2 units of foreign language, 2 of mathematics, and 2 of science.

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FLORIDA

20

English  
Social studies, including 1 unit of American history  
or American history and government  
Mathematics  
Science  
Physical education  
Homemaking (for girls)  
Electives

3  
2  
1  
1  
2  
1  
10 or 11

Required by law: civil government, U.S. Constitution, history of Florida, conservation of natural resources, flag education, principles of agriculture, and teaching the effects of alcohol—all without specification of grade level.

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GEORGIA

16

English  
Social studies, including American and Georgia  
history and Constitutions (required by law)  
Mathematics  
Science  
Health (physical and mental)

3  
3  
1  
1  
1

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
	Electives	<u>7</u>
	Physical education--30 minutes per day is required by law. (Courses should be adapted to needs of handicapped as well as physically normal.)	
IDAHO	English and literature	3
17	Social studies including 1 unit of U.S. history and $\frac{1}{2}$ unit of U.S. government	$1\frac{1}{2}$
	Mathematics	1
	Science	1
	Health	$\frac{1}{2}$
	Physical education (not athletics)	$\frac{1}{2}$
	Electives	<u>9<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
ILLINOIS	English	3
16	American history or American history and civics	1
	Electives	<u>12<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
	Physiology and health instruction are required by law of all public school pupils in grade 9.	
	Boards of education are required "to make proper and suitable provisions for instruction in physical education and to give such training in all grades for not less than 1 hour of each week during the whole of the school year."	
INDIANA	English	3
16	Social studies, including 1 unit of U.S. history and 1 unit of citizenship	2
	Mathematics	1
	Science	1
	Health and Safety	$\frac{1}{2}$
	Physical education	$\frac{1}{2}$
	Electives	<u>8<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
IOWA	Social studies, including 1 year of history and civics and $\frac{1}{2}$ year of economics and sociology	$1\frac{1}{2}$
16	Electives	<u>14<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
	Physical education and health instruction are required by law for all pupils for 50 minutes each week. Modified courses shall be provided for physically or	



State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
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mentally handicapped pupils. The Department urges the use of more time for physical education than the law requires. Instruction in physiology and hygiene, including the effects of alcohol and narcotics, must be provided for all pupils.

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KANSAS	English	3
16	Social studies: American history 1; American government and Constitution 1	2
	Mathematics	1
	Laboratory science	1
	Physical education	1
	Electives	<u>8</u>

2 majors of 3 units each and 2 minors of 2 units each are required.

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KENTUCKY	English	3
16	Social studies, including 1 unit of American history	2
	Mathematics	1
	Science	2
	Health and physical education	1
	Electives	<u>7</u>

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LOUISIANA	English	3
17	Social studies: American history 1; Civics 1	2
	Mathematics (If the 1½ is offered, the ½ must be senior or business arithmetic.)	1½ or 2
	Science	1
	Physical education	1
	Electives	<u>8½ or 8</u>

The 17 units offered shall be so selected as to constitute 3 majors or 2 majors and 2 minors.

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MAINE	English	4
16	American history	1
	Electives	<u>11</u>

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State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
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MARYLAND  16	English	4
	Social studies, including 1 unit of U.S. history	3
	Mathematics	1
	Science	2
	Electives	<u>6</u>

Several periods a week of health and physical education for all pupils in grades 9-12 are strongly recommended.

MASSACHUSETTS  15	American history and civics, including the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution and history of the Commonwealth	
	Electives	$\frac{1}{14}$

MICHIGAN  —	Government (legislative requirement)	$\frac{1}{2}$
	Also required: physical education, the teaching of temperance, and the humane treatment of animals	

MINNESOTA  *12	English	3
	Social studies, including 1 unit of American history	2
	Electives from the fields of science, mathematics, foreign language, practical arts, and business education	<u>3</u>
	Additional electives	<u>4</u>

Legal requirements include instruction in health, physical education through the 10th grade, instruction in morals, alcohol, narcotics, Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States.

\*NOTE: Only the credits earned in senior secondary school are counted toward graduation. Constant subjects in the 9th grade include English, social studies, general science, health and physical education, and practical arts.

MISSISSIPPI  16	English	3
	American history	1
	Electives	<u>12</u>

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
MISSOURI	English	3
17	Social studies, including "personal, community and State problems; problems of the western hemisphere, world problems and history; and American history and government."	3
	Mathematics (grade 9)	1
	Natural science	1
	Fine arts (art or music)	1
	Practical arts	1
	Physical education and health, minimum of 2 periods a week (4 years earning $\frac{1}{4}$ unit a year)	1
	Electives	<u>6</u>
MONTANA	English	4
16	Social studies: American history 1; American government $\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$
	Electives	<u>10<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
NEBRASKA	No required courses	
16	Electives	<u>16</u>
NEVADA	English	3
16	Social studies, including 1 year of American history and government	2
	Mathematics (or business arithmetic)	1
	Science (or home economics or agriculture)	1
	Physical education	1
	Electives	<u>8</u>
NEW HAMPSHIRE	English	3
16	American history and government	1
	Electives	<u>12</u>
	2 majors of 3 units each and 1 minor of 2 units are required.	
NEW JERSEY	Social studies, including 2 years of American history (legal requirement) and a year of community civics in 9th grade if it has not been taught earlier	2 or 3
15 1/5	Physical education, health and safety (legal requirement, with 150 minutes a week for 4 years)	$\frac{4}{5}$
	Electives	<u>12 <math>\frac{2}{5}</math> or 11 <math>\frac{2}{5}</math></u>

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
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Other legal requirements: nature of alcohol and narcotics; domestic hygiene and first aid for all girls; 1 hour instruction a month in fire prevention.

NEW MEXICO  16	English	3
	Social studies, including a year of American history or American history and civics	2
	Mathematics	1
	Laboratory science: Chemistry, Physics, or Biology (Under certain circumstances Vocational science may be substituted.)	
	Electives	$\frac{1}{9}$

The State Board recommends that physical training be mandatory 5 periods a week each year for every boy and girl physically able. One-half unit of credit should be given for each of the 4 years.

Besides the major in English, the pupil must offer 2 majors or 3 minors or an equal combination of majors and minors.

NEW YORK  16	English	4
	Social studies, including a year of American history	3
	Science (9th grade)	1
	Health	$\frac{1}{2}$
	Electives	$\frac{7}{2}$

Physical education is listed as a requirement with no explanation given.

Each pupil must follow a 3-year sequence in one of the following fields: science, mathematics, foreign language, music, art or drawing, business subjects, practical and industrial arts or vocational subjects.

NORTH CAROLINA  16	English	4
	Social studies, including a year of American history	2
	Mathematics	1
	Science: Biology and 1 additional unit	2
	Physical education and health (9th grade)	1
	Electives	$\frac{6}{6}$

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
NORTH DAKOTA	English	4
16	Social studies: U.S. history 1; World history 1; Problems of Democracy 1	3
	Mathematics	1
	Natural laboratory science (2 units of Homemaking or Vocational agriculture may be substituted for 1 unit of Science.)	2
	Physical education	1
	Electives	<u>5</u>
	Safety and driver education is required.	
OHIO	English	3
16	Social studies, including 1 year of American history and government	2
	Mathematics	1
	Science	1
	Health and physical education	1
	Electives	<u>8</u>
	Besides the major in English, each graduate must have one other major of 3 units and 2 minors of 2 units.	
OKLAHOMA	English (Speech and Journalism may be substituted for English literature.)	4
16	American history	1
	Mathematics	1
	Laboratory science, chosen from General science, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry	1
	Electives	<u>9</u>
OREGON	English	3
19	Social studies: 9th grade social studies 1; U.S. history and government and American problems 2	3
	Mathematics	1
	Science	1
	Health and physical education	4
	Electives	<u>7</u>

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
PENNSYLVANIA	English	2
*13	Social studies, including 1 unit of American history and government	2
	Health and physical education, 3 years	1
	Electives	<u>8</u>
	*Grades 10, 11, and 12. Only the credits earned in these grades are counted for graduation. Constant subjects in the 9th grade include 1 unit of English, 1 of social studies, 1 of mathematics, 1 of general science, plus health and physical education.	
RHODE ISLAND	State law requires that every high school shall give thorough instruction in the Constitution and government of Rhode Island and in the Constitution and government of the United States.	
SOUTH CAROLINA	English	4
16	Social studies, including 1 unit of U.S. history which includes a careful study of the Constitution	2
	Mathematics	1
	Natural science	1
	Electives	<u>8</u>
	Physical education is required by law. Besides English, a major of 3 units and a minor of 2 units are required.	
SOUTH DAKOTA	English	3
16	Social studies in grades 11 and 12, with not less than $\frac{1}{2}$ unit each of American history and American government	2
	Mathematics	1
	Laboratory science	1
	Electives	<u>9</u>
TENNESSEE	English	4
16	American history, including Tennessee and U.S. Constitutions	1
	Mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, or applied math)	1
	Health and physical education	1
	Electives	<u>9</u>

The State Board strongly recommends that each pupil be required to earn a unit of science.

State, with total units required	Subject requirements	Required and elective units
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TEXAS	English	3
16	Social studies, including 1 unit in American history or civics and intensive study of Federal and Texas Constitutions	2
	Mathematics	2
	Science	1
	Electives	<u>8</u>

Each secondary pupil receives 120 minutes of instruction in health and physical education each week.

UTAH	English	3
16	Social studies, including 1 unit of U.S. history and government	3
	Electives	<u>10</u>

A daily program of health and physical education is required in grade 9 and in 2 of the grades 10-12.

VERMONT	English	4
16	U.S. history	1
	Electives	<u>11</u>

VIRGINIA	English (Journalism or speech may be substituted for 12th grade English.)	4
16	Social studies: Virginia and U.S. history 1, Virginia and U.S. government 1	2
	Mathematics	1
	Laboratory science	1
	Electives	<u>8</u>

Health and physical education, 4 years.

WASHINGTON	English	3
16	Social studies: U.S. history and government 1; Washington State history and government $\frac{1}{2}$ ; other 1	$2\frac{1}{2}$
	Mathematics	1
	Laboratory science	1
	Practical arts	1
	Electives	<u><math>7\frac{1}{2}</math></u>

Health and physical education, 2 years.

	Due	Returned	Due	Returned	
State, with total units required					Required and elective units

WEST VIRGINIA	English				3
	Social studies, including American history				3
16	Mathematics				1
	Science: Biology				1
	Physical education: 4 years				1
	Electives				<u>7</u>

WISCONSIN	Electives				<u>16</u>
16	4 years of health and physical education, safety, and fire prevention, and a unit in conservation and cooperatives are required.				

WYOMING	No requirements				
16	Electives				<u>16</u>



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